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Oral history Mary Trigeiro
October 15, 1996
Interview by Laurie Horn and Evelyn McClure

Laurie: You know something else, she's (Evelyn) very interested in the Portuguese people because she doesn't know anything about them.

M: She didn't?

L: No. She's a newcomer. There's a lot of Portuguese people. Well, where did you come from ? (to Evelyn)

E: Midwest, Wisconsin. And we know there's a lot of Portuguese families settled here so it's interesting to hear their story, how they came here.

Mary: My mother and father came from the Azore Islands. My dad is from one island and mother is from the other. But she came out herein 1884. And my dad was before that. I don't know. He was out here a long (time) they met - it was here.

E: Oh so they got married here?

M: They got married at St. Sebastian's. I mean they got married at St. Rose, Saint Sebastian wasn't here.

E: So you were born herein 1900? M: Huh? E: If you're going to be 96 this year, you were born in 1900?

M: I was born November 12, 1900 and before that I had two brothers but we were eight children and four of the boys are in heaven and one sister.

E: What were your parent's names?

M: My father's was Joseph Trigeiro. My mother's name was Adelaide Nunes Trigeiro.

E: And so, they - when did your father buy his property? He came and what did he do, what did he work at when he first came here?

M: Oh, his uncle from Petaluma, John Catin (sp?) had gone to the Azore Islands and he was papa's (word?) so he brought the twelve year old boy with him in the 1800s and he took him out to Bodega Bay to Gaffney's Dairy and papa lived - he was 12, 13 years of age and he went there to do chores and he rode horse. There was no, you had to row on the boat or ride a horse and he used to ride horseback to go to the town of Bodega Bay, the Bay. There was a little school there and he went to grade school there. And then, he lived in the dairy for Gaffney's and then when he felt that he was able to be on his own, he came over to Sebastopol and he

bought 20 acres above where our ranch is now. And he built a house, he went to work at the mill and he built a home and then the lady and man that brought her (Mary's mother) from the old country were neighbors so they used to come and visit and they introduced my father to her. And the marriage took place.

E: So did he raise fruit on his 20 acres?

M: Oh, then he sold 10 to 2 different families. Each bought 5 and he kept 10. And then he was getting the idea, he used to work for Mr. Hunt in the orchard and he said "Gee I'd like to have an orchard of my own" And across the street there was a new - which turned out to be our ranch, he bought it. There was 27 acres and he bought that.

E: Do you know who he bought it from?

M: I don't know who it belonged to but he borrowed the money from the bank and it was handled through the bank.

L: And he was honest and they trusted him. He just got the money from the bank because he was honest.

M: Oh yeah, They loaned him the money. He had such good credit and imagine, to buy a property. Of course, the bank keeps the property you know. They're secure. Anyway he bought in 1903 across the (street) - the big ranch. And in 1906 we had the earthquake and we had a big two story house and that was collapsed. We were left without a house and we had a little woodshed out in the back near the barn. They moved the woodshed near and they put the wood stove in there to cook and two double beds in there and dad went downtown and bought a tent and set a tent up for the dining room.

And the relatives from Bodega, I mean Petaluma, that same man, he was supposed to be a make-shift carpenter. Well he brought his family-relatives and they built, took down the old house and rebuilt the new house and in September of 1906 they had the house with a roof, good foundation, the walls, windows and doors. And they moved into that house. It was just rough, no paint, no papering or nothing but the rooms all had doors and windows.

E; And how many children were there?

M: We were ten children --- there was Joe, Frank, Johnny, Bill and I. There were six of us. That's why they put up the double beds.

L: Was the Portuguese organization going at this time:

M: No

E; When did it start?

M: 1910 for what we call the Holy Ghost Society. I was queen in 1915

E: Oh good for you!

M: Big deal

E; Do you have any pictures? Of yourself as queen?

M: No, just a family group picture

E: Do you remember how many families of Portuguese ancestry were living in the Sebastopol area?

M: I don't know. But all of Barlow Lane was owned by small families, 5 acres and my dad had the big ranch.

L: So tell her about what you did. What was your life like.

M: I went to school. I majored in music with the nuns at the convent in Santa Rosa, Saint Rose and later I went to work for Dr. Viera in the office. And during the Depression I was laid off. All the girls that worked for the doctors were laid off. I went to work in our little Hillside Hospital and I worked in there two years as a practical nurse because I wasn't trained. But I worked during the war, 1942 and you know the doctors from Santa Rosa. I guess I've been always trustworthy. Dr. Thurlowson (sp?) (said) "Give me Mary, I want her to help me" And I assisted him in the surgery. Can you imagine?

L: I worked at the Hillside Hospital when I went to high school.
I used to do the laundry and hang it outside and then I would feed the men that had broken arms or couldn't feed themselves. That was my job.

M: Then 1919 my mother died in childbirth. And my little brother is now 77. I raised him and I love him and I'm very proud of him. And that's that. I never married. I want you to know, nobody'd have me.

L: And she ran a dress shop in Sebastopol.

M: Oh I forgot about that. That was when I left the doctor. I was afraid I had too much money. And I always had a dream of owning a dress shop.

E: Did you make dresses or did you sell dresses that were already made?

M: I specialized in very nice clothes. They were high priced clothes. Like hats. Well I made hats, special made hats. I took care of brides. I did beautiful brides. Crochet I made and gave away. I did a lot of fancy work but I gave that to my family.

E: So what did you do after the dress shop? (Mary had the shop 6 years)

M: I came up here (Burbank Heights Senior Housing) I retired. It was time to give up and I've been here ever since.I've been here 21 years.

L: Do you just have one sister and one brother left? Virginia and Eddie?

M: Eddie, Tony and Eddie and Virginia and Adelaide and I. My dad died in 1942. He was broken hearted because the war broke out. And my brothers were drafted and one brother had enlisted in the Navy. He was a surveyor so he enlisted and he had a commission all the way. But the other boys didn't have to go.

E: Well did your father grow apples all those years?

M: We had the most beautiful Gravenstein orchard and they were choice. He won many prizes from the Gravensteins for the Apple Show. That he did. He was proud of his orchard.

E: Well tell us more about the Holy Ghost Society. What were some of their activities?

M: They raised enough money between the old timers to buy a crown because in Portugal there was a famine and people went to the queen "We want you to help us". And she said "Join me, and we'll walk up to church and I'll present my crown to the priests to offer to God to bring us food" And they all went with her and she gave her crown to the priest. He met her at the door. And that's what the little queen does, carry the crown and the priest meets her at the door and she gives him the crown. They walk and at the hall (Holy Ghost Hall) we have a free-feed. It's really pot roast with french bread and they put a lot of gravy over the french bread. They made Sopa and its delicious!

L: When is it held?

M: It falls on Pentecost Sunday. Your calendar tells you.

E: Sometime in August or July?

M: It's in June

E: Its different every year?

M: June

L: And you dress up in white dresses and walk up to the hall and then they walk back to the church.

M: They meet at the hall, form a parade at the hall and they march from the hall to the church and the priest met them. And then they march back and they have the hall all set up and Sopa and the dinner is ready and the priest comes in there and joins them, blesses the food and they have a dinner. And they fed over 3,000 last year.

E: Wow. How come we don't hear anything about this?

L: Its in the paper.

more on the tape?